

**Testimony Given to the Joint Committee on
Education and Appropriations
January 18, 2007**

**By: Joseph F. McDonald, President
Salish Kootenai College**

Chairman Jack Wells and Committee Members,

Thank you for providing time on your busy schedule to hear about Salish Kootenai College.

Salish Kootenai College is a Tribal College that is chartered by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe. Its Board of seven members is appointed by the Tribal Council and 85% of the student body identify themselves as American Indian. 65% of the student body is enrolled members of federally recognized tribes. 18% of the student body meets the definition of non-beneficiary students.

The College's mission is to provide quality postsecondary opportunities for American Indians locally and throughout the United States. The College encourages diversity and recognizes the importance of college opportunity for the residents of the Flathead Indian Reservation and thus maintains open admissions.

SKC is modeled after America's community colleges. A model just like you heard this morning from Flathead Valley Community College, Miles City Community College, and Dawson Community College. Our only difference

is that we offer six baccalaureate degrees in addition to 14 two-year degrees and seven certificates for yearlong courses of study.

This past year we awarded 31 baccalaureate degrees with 12 of them awarded to non-beneficiary students, we awarded 116 associate degrees (two-year) with 50 to non-beneficiary students, and we awarded 46 certificates of completion with 14 awarded to non-beneficiary students.

Salish Kootenai College works hard to provide access to college for American Indians from throughout the United States; access to college for all residents of the Flathead Indian Reservation and its surrounding area. We sometimes have non-beneficiary nursing students commuting from Libby, Kalispell, Missoula, Hamilton, Superior, and other surrounding communities.

Access means that the college has open admissions, is affordable, has quality learning resources, adequate facilities, counseling and retention programs, placement assistance and follow up of graduates. To provide access the College must maintain institutional accreditation.

Appropriation to help defray the cost of serving non-beneficiary students is essential to Salish Kootenai College's effort to provide access to quality education and maintaining institutional accreditation.

This year our General Fund Budget Income Projection is as follows:

823 Indian Student Count (ISC) x \$4800	=	\$3,950,400	49%
186 Non Beneficiary x \$1503	=	\$ 280,000	3%
Tuition and Fees		\$2,378,000	29%
Other Revenue Sources (Indirect Cost, Foundation)		<u>\$1,572,721</u>	19%
Total General Fund Budget Income		\$8,121,121	
Total General Fund Expenditure		\$8,121,121	

If the appropriated amount was increased to 3,024 per non-beneficiary student the Salish Kootenai College budget would be increased by \$280,000, which would be a 3% increase and would meet inflation costs. We could then not have to raise student tuition and fees. This would require a total appropriation of \$1.87 million or an addition of \$974,880 general fund appropriation in the 2009 biennium.

It is a hardship on students when tuition and fees are increased and all of us in Higher Education would like to cap these costs. Cost of services continue to rise and if we are going to cap tuition and fees then additional support from the State is needed or non-beneficiary students and additional support for American Indians is needed from the federal government. I sincerely hope that you will support an increase in the funding of non-beneficiary students so that we can keep student costs from rising.

Montana has an accredited tribal college on each of its seven reservations. Each college maintains an open admissions policy and serves non-beneficiary students. I know if there were non-beneficiary students from these colleges here today, they would testify as to the importance of the tribal colleges to them in these rurally isolated places in Montana.

This past year the seven tribal colleges had a fulltime equivalent student count of 3,077 students. 299 of the total full time equivalent students were non-beneficiary students, which is 10% of the total student count.

Non-beneficiary students at Salish Kootenai College made up 18% of its total full time equivalent enrollment this past year. They are an important part of our student body and we want to continue to serve them.

Many misunderstandings in the community are cleared up by the mix of Indian and non-Indian students in the classroom. Students of different ethnic backgrounds, religious backgrounds, and political backgrounds learn to work together. Students have a broader understanding of other cultural groups when they attend classes together and work together on class projects.

The long-term effect is greater understanding of each other in the community and this makes the community stronger.

Salish Kootenai College has its own goals that are more specific than those of the University System. The Goals of the University System have been met well by Salish Kootenai College.

We have helped the University System meet Goal 1. We have provided access to college for non-beneficiary students as well as American Indian students. Our graduates have transferred seamlessly to the University System and have had an excellent completion rate.

Our educational programs are excellent and are accredited. We have been able to keep cost affordable and had \$5.2 million pass through our financial aid office to assist students financially.

We work closely with the K-12 schools on our reservation. We have conducted workshops for teachers of science and mathematics, and we have conducted several math and science camps for students from grade six to twelve. We also have an Upward Bound Program and an intensive youth leadership program for at-risk youth.

We are also developing our distance on-line learning. This past year we have had over 350 students taking classes on-line. One of our full time instructors teaches from her home in western North Dakota.

SKC has worked diligently at helping to meet Goal II. We have worked locally to help train the work force for highway construction, nursing, dental assisting, information technology, business, forestry and soon will offer computer engineering. We try to keep track of the high demand fields and offer appropriate training.

Goal III is something we work on constantly as do all of the Tribal Colleges. We try to get the "greatest bang for the buck," In past our students built our

own buildings. Our construction program does much of our landscaping, parking lot development, and site preparation for construction. We utilize donable property greatly. It equips our entire heavy equipment construction program and all or our transportation fleet.

We have worked with the University System to make student transfer as seamless as possible.

Chairman Wells, I could go on, but I am going to stop and I will be pleased to answer any questions you might have.